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Two Sermons
by
Rowan, A. M.,
Stephen W.



Class 334

Book 11

Stephen N. Rowan

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THE SIN AND DANGER

OF

INSENSIBILITY

UNDER THE CALLS OF GOD TO REPENTANCE

TWO SERMONS,

DELIVERED IN THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, AT GREENWICH,

IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,

ON THURSDAY, JULY 30, 1812,

THE DAY SET APART BY THE JOINT RECOMMENDATION OF THE

GENERAL SYNOD OF THE R. D. CHURCH,

AND OF

HIS EXCELLENCY DANIEL D. TOMPKINS,

GOVERNOR OF THIS STATE,

AS A DAY OF

FASTING, HUMILIATION, AND PRAYER.

BY **STEPHEN N. ROWAN, A. M.**

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY WHITING AND WATSON, NO. 96 BROADWAY.

J. SEYMOUR, PRINTER.

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1812.

Congregational Theological Library.

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WHITING & WATSON,

HAVING directed their exertions, almost exclusively, to the publishing and vending Theological and Classical books; and having received that patronage from the religious public which, in their judgment, warrants them in pursuing the same plan, upon a more extended and systematic scale, and in compliance with the advice and solicitations of some of the most distinguished Divines of the present day, propose to republish, in a neat and uniform style, a series of the most valuable, scarce, and necessary works in theoretical and practical Divinity. They intend, if suitable encouragement be afforded, in this way to furnish a general Theological Library, for Clerergymen, Biblical Students, Religious Societies, and Individuals, who value the interests of Religion and Science.

The plan of forming Congregational Libraries, in every Religious Society, for the *use of its ministers*, but to remain for ever the property of the congregation, has long been a favourite object with the friends of piety and learning; particularly as relates to Country Towns, where the scanty support which ministers of the Gospel receive, will not enable them to purchase even the most essential books. A learned and pious ministry, is indeed the greatest ornament, the highest privilege, and the richest blessing of a Christian country; and no plan can be devised so *sure*, so *convenient*, and so *cheap*, to attain this important object, as the one now proposed.

In most cases, where a Religious Society is organized, the insignificant sum of *one cent per month*, from each individual, would, in a few years, furnish a very general and valuable Library, for the use of their Pastors and Teachers, through generations yet unborn! and thus afford the means to those Pastors and Teachers to become, that, which otherwise they never will, nor ever *can* become, (except in a very subordinate degree,) learned, interesting, useful workmen, in their great Master's service; who need not be ashamed; rightly dividing the word of truth; giving to each his portion in due season.

Ye who prize the mercies of the sanctuary, above the gold that perisheth; ye who value sound doctrine in those that watch for souls; ye who reverence learning, talents, and piety when consecrated to the service of Jehovah; ye whose souls desire to see the triumphs of the cross multiplied on the earth, to have the mouths of gainsayers stopped, and the ignorance of foolish men put to silence;—ponder ye this subject: count the cost up to its utmost cent; and then weigh it in the balance, the balance of Eternity, against your own personal interest in its success, and the heritage you will leave to your children.

A prospectus, with a more detailed view of the plan and subjects of the publication, will shortly be given to the public.

New-York, August, 1812.

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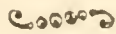
A NUMBER of persons, who heard these Sermons preached, have requested me to give them a copy for publication. From granting this request, much as I respect the source from whence it came, I should most certainly have excused myself, had it not been for the manifest injustice which has been done me, in representing them as partial, anti-administration productions. *I have never yet introduced party politics into the pulpit.* Whenever I have spoken on the affairs of the nation, it has been from *broad Scriptural principles*, which I supposed both parties would acknowledge to be just. And if either of them, on reviewing these principles, find themselves aggrieved, I can only say, what was once said by the learned Howe, they “save me the most difficult part of a discourse, *the application.*” The fault is not mine; it is their own want of conformity to Scripture truth, and whatever party does not regulate its principles by the sacred Scriptures, “have no light in them.” This is the Standard by which I desire to be judged; and it is that I may be judged by this judgment, and consequently prevent misrepresentation, that I now consent to let the public see these papers. And may the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name I have spoken, so far as they are agreeable to his will, accompany them with his blessing.

STEPHEN N. ROWAN.

Greenwich, New-York, August 4th, 1812.



SERMON I.



ISAIAH xxii. 12, 13, 14.

“ And in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.... And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts.



GOD is the Sovereign disposer of all the events which take place in the world. His providence pervades the universe. Nothing can possibly take place without his will; nor in any manner that does not exactly correspond with his design. “He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou*?” This truth, which *reason* legitimately infers from a contemplation of the perfections of God; and which revelation firmly establishes, is replete with instruction and consolation. And yet no truth is more liable to cavil, to misconception, or abuse. The majority of men in the pride and unbelief of their hearts, conduct as if God was

* Dan. iv. 25.

not the moral Governor of the universe; and they were under no obligations to him as their Sovereign. And, even among those who acknowledge his superintending care, there are multitudes, who either atheistically contemn, or presumptuously rely upon it. Some, in the madness of their presumption, rely upon God for safety and protection, without any reference to the means he has put in their power to secure these ends. And others, are continually trusting to means, while they are utterly regardless of his blessing, “who works all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Among this last description, were the Jews in the days of Isaiah. The Assyrians, under Sennacherib, had invaded their country; dismantled many of their fortified cities, and threatened the siege of Jerusalem itself. Under these circumstances, the Jews, instead of looking to God for aid, contented themselves with examining the state of their armouries and fortifications; making various preparations for the defence of their city; and living as securely as if they had no reason to apprehend danger. Thus saith the Prophet, “ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall: ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the Maker there-

* See Scott's Commentary on this passage.

of, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago*." This profane contempt of his uplifted scourge so provoked the Lord, that he determined to inflict upon them his heaviest vengeance ; and accordingly it was revealed in the ears of the Prophet, "surely this iniquity shall not be purged away from you till ye die."

How far the denunciation in this passage may be applicable to the American people, we cannot at present say, because that is yet to be ascertained from the result of God's dealings with them. But there is a remarkable coincidence between the state of our country, and that of Judah, before this sentence was pronounced. The hand of God is upon us ; his judgments have not only gathered over our horison, but they have actually burst on our guilty heads : and there is too much reason to fear, that, though God's voice is crying unto us, yet few hear the rod, and him who has appointed it !

That the "rod of his indignation," is smiting us, has been determined by his Church, the only legitimate interpreter of his providential dispensations ; and the interpretation has been considered just by our civil rulers. Under the influence of this sentiment, they have set apart this day, as "*a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer,*" to "*make acknowledgment of our sins, and beseech the divine Majesty,*

* Ver. 10, 11.

that in the midst of deserved wrath he would remember mercy.*

That we may then, as far as possible, accomplish the design of our present meeting, we shall, from the passage read, consider,

I. What there is *in this day* that specially calls for the duty of "*weeping and mourning.*"

II. The state in which we continue, notwithstanding these calls. And,

III. The sin and danger of that state.

1. What is there at the present day that specially calls for the duty of weeping and mourning?

In that day did the Lord God of hosts *call* to *weeping*, and to *mourning*, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth.

The day here alluded to, was a day of abounding iniquity, and of sore rebuke. Whoever will take the trouble to peruse the first chapters of this book, will find the most melancholy description of

* See the printed Circular of the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church, on this subject.

the state of the Jews at that period. They are represented as having been “*nourished and brought up like children, and yet as having rebelled against God : as a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers ; children that are corrupters ;* who had forsaken the Lord, who had provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, who had gone away backward*.” As they abounded in iniquity, so they were partakers of heavy judgments. And hence the Prophet, at the 4th verse of this chapter, breaks out in a most pathetic lamentation :—“*Look away from me ; I will weep bitterly : labour not to comfort me ; because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity, by the Lord God of Hosts, in the valley of vision.*”

In this day of iniquity and of judgment did “the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and mourning ; to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth,” that is, to the deepest humiliation, and the most unfeigned repentance for their sins ; for these terms are used in the text to express *repentance*. In every age and every country, weeping and mourning are the spontaneous expressions of internal sorrow : and in different countries they are usually accompanied with different signs. In the eastern countries, and

* Chap. I.

especially among the Jews, the tears of their lamentation were accompanied with rending their clothes, shaving the head, cutting off the beard, and covering themselves with sackcloth. "They shall," says the prophet Ezekiel, speaking of this custom, "make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth; and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart, and bitter wailing*."

This then being the import of the call, what is there *in the day* in which we live, that affords us ground for the belief that this call is addressed to us? we answer, *the state of the world*, and *the state of the Church*.

1st. *The state of the world.*

The judgments of God are abroad in the earth. From the foundation of the world, there never was such a period, as the present, known. Events are every day taking place, which past ages never witnessed; which the nations that have gone before us, if they had been previously told of them, would not have believed, and which we should not credit, if we had seen them only on the page of history. The universe is in commotion: almost all the nations of the earth are in arms. In looking over the map of

the globe we can scarcely place our finger on a spot that enjoys the blessings of peace*. The rage of man is contending with that of the elements, to see which shall produce the greatest degree of misery on the earth. We hear the wailing of afflicted Islands, and the cries of nations in distress. *Poland* is dismembered, and her scattered fragments remain ungathered, only to show us what was once her power. *Holland* and *Switzerland* are mourning over the ruins of their republics. *The states of Italy* no longer retain either their boundaries or their names. *Spain* is struggling for her liberties, against the infamous deception, and the unrighteous invasion of Tyranny. *Russia* is rising in the defence of her rights. In short, all the civilized nations of the eastern continent, are in a state of consternation. And all this is owing, as *the instrumental cause*, to the rapacity and ambition of a single individual; who is subduing kingdoms and subverting thrones; trampling under his feet the crowns of kings; endeavouring to bury in oblivion the distinctive names of the several nations; and in his grasp at universal dominion, attempting to style them all, the empire of *Napoleon*. This Tyrant of France, and this scourge of the world, is now, in the hand of God, scourging these nations for their

* It is melancholy to reflect, that the only exceptions to this remark, are found among heathen nations.

crimes; for their rebellion against God, and for the blood of the Saints which they formerly shed. And in the blood which thus flows for blood, we see written in legible characters, *the judgments of the Lord*. The machinations of this worldly politician, are daily working together for the accomplishment of Jehovah's designs; **THOUGH HE DESERVES NO CREDIT FOR IT**, because he only attends to the furtherance of his own. For what the Prophet Isaiah once said of the Assyrian, is literally true of him. "He is the rod of mine anger, and the staff in his hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the streets. *Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off* **NATIONS NOT A FEW***." And whenever Jehovah has performed by him, the work of chastisement, he will punish his stout heart, and the glory of his high looks. He will "put a hook in the nose, and a bridle in the lips" of this raging monster, and "lead him back by the way in which he came†," an object of contempt to those very nations that now tremble at his power‡.

* Chap. x. 5, 6.

† Isaiah xxxvii. 29.

‡ The author would not be understood as deciding upon

And what is the state of England, *that land of our Fathers ; that abode of Gospel light ;* that example to all other nations, in her attempts to diffuse the knowledge of the religion of Jesus Christ? She too is distracted. Her power is exerted against the *paralyzing and demoralizing touch of French despotism ;* and so far she has a claim on the gratitude and the prayers of the friends of liberty, and the happiness of man. But still she is in other respects unjust, selfish, and unmindful of her own interests, and of others' rights. If France is the tyrant of the land, England is the tyrant of the sea. It would seem as if she cannot bear that the sails of any other nation should whiten the ocean, or that their commerce should bring back riches to their shores*. And therefore, no wonder that while unjust to others she should not prosper herself. No wonder that the council of her counselors should come to naught: that she should now be convulsed and torn with internal dissensions; that her citizens should rise in rebellion against the constituted authorities ;

the MANNER in which Bonaparte will be punished: only as expressing his firm belief of the fact.

* This was written under the impression, that *the Orders in Council* were not revoked. These Orders, the author has always viewed as a gross infringement on the rights of neutrals.

and threaten the destruction of her political institutions*.

But, my hearers, Europe is not the only theatre, either of wickedness or of judgment. Our individual and national sins have long gone up to heaven, as a memorial against us. They have been gathering a mighty tempest around our horizon; and it has already begun to beat upon our devoted country. And if the state of other nations calls upon us to drop the tear of sympathy, the state of our own calls for the tears of lamentation and wo.

The Americans, like the inhabitants of Judea, are “a people laden with iniquity; who have forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger;” who have forfeited every claim to a divine benediction; and have deservedly drawn down the righteous indignation of heaven. And were we now to attempt an *enumeration* of those sins, which constitute our national guilt, we might find ourselves unequal to the task. We can only mention a few of the most prominent, for which the nation is afflicted, and for which the nation ought to mourn.

* Reference is here had, to the late riots in the manufacturing towns in England.

(1.) *The elevation of men to offices of trust, "who have not the fear of God before their eyes."*

I am aware that the subject I now touch is delicate. I am aware that the people are willing to be told their own faults, but that the moment we speak of the faults of their rulers, their sensibilities revolt. I am aware too that any thing said on this subject, is apt to be put down to the account of party partiality. Such partiality, however, **ON THIS POINT,** I utterly disclaim. I am not now speaking for a party, but for the Lord of hosts: and should not only esteem this place unsuitable, but this day unseasonable, to attempt an excitement of party feelings. And, we trust, that such feelings will not be excited, when we reflect upon the simple fact, that both parties are equally guilty, only with this difference, that one is more successful than the other.

If, after this declaration, "the prophets must, on this subject, prophesy smooth things, and the people will have it so," I can only observe, that you shall never have it so from me, and that I have no apologies to make to any man or to any set of men*.

* The author felt himself constrained to take this stand in his own defence. Several persons, *strange to tell!* who do not approve the Scriptural sentiments contained in the following paragraph, have arrogantly called him to account for

It is not then party ground, but the *ground of God's unerring word*, on which we stand, when we affirm that it constitutes national guilt to put wicked men in national offices. For what are the scriptural qualifications of a ruler? David, in 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. answers, "the God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spake to me, he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."—"The ruler," says St. Paul, "is the minister of God for good; a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*."—"When the righteous are in authority," says Solomon, "the people rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn†."

If, then, the magistracy is an institution of God, the magistrate being his minister; if it is *positively* required of this minister, that he *rule in the fear of God*; if he *must do good and execute* wrath upon them that *do evil*; how can we presume to dispense with these qualifications; or consider any other as adequate substitutes? What then has been the con-

them, as if they were his *Father Confessors*. He wished them to understand that he has as good a right to his opinions as they have, and that he has no idea of being taken to task, by every body that happens to differ from him. According to the Law and the Testimony, he desires to speak, without previously making the calculation, who it will please, and who it will displease.

* Rom. xiii. 4.

† Prov. xxix. 2.

duct of the American people in reference to the moral character of their rulers? Has it been the inquiry, when a candidate has been proposed, “*is the fear of God before his eyes?*” And when this has not been the case, that you have conscientiously withheld your support? Or rather, has it not been, “*is he one of the party, and will he adopt party measures?*” and, when answered in the affirmative, have you not yielded him both the influence of your persons and your property? And what has been the consequence of this mad dereliction of principle? Has it not been that for years we have scarcely had a ruler who was even suspected of having the “fear of God before his eyes?” And that we have had multitudes who have been suspected of almost every thing else? These are alarming facts; facts, which are attributable, in part, to the *want of religious principle*, but chiefly to **THE SPIRIT OF PARTY**, among the people. Party considerations have, on this point, been paramount to all others; even to the authority of God’s holy word, and to the bonds that have been wound round the conscience by the reception of his grace. The people in general, but *professing christians in particular*, have been too apt to think, that, in party matters, they might dispense with all those rules of morality, which, in every other case, they deem it their duty to observe. The very same persons, who, in private life, are considerate, reasonable,

and impartial, are too often, even in the choice of *wicked men for their rulers*, vehement, acrimonious, censorious, and unjust. On what grounds they establish this strange distinction, and why they conceive the obligations of religion to be binding in one case, and not in the other, is to us utterly incomprehensible. Sure we are, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ makes no such exceptions as these; but lays down the *same rules of conduct* to all men, *in all relations and circumstances of life*.

The general prevalence, then, of that unscriptural notion, that a man, who has not the fear of God, can rule well, is a delusion; and the alarming extent to which this delusion is cherished, in the choice of our rulers, is, we firmly believe, a national sin. As such, we, in the name of God, charge it to the consciences of the guilty, as one of the sources of our present afflictions, and which, on this day, ought to be one of the chief subjects of national sorrow.

2. The alarming prevalence of irreligion and profaneness, is a call upon us this day to mourn.

Of this we have ample proofs, in our luxury and extravagance; our debauchery and intemperance; our profane swearing, and our wanton breach of the sabbath.

All the creatures of God are good, if received with thanksgiving, and used in moderation. But it is the crime of the American people that they have not merely *used*, but abused, the creatures of God. Our own soil produces every thing necessary, both for the conveniences and comforts of life; and besides these, in the abuse of which we have not been sparing, we have revelled in the dainties and luxuries of every other clime. We “stretch ourselves upon our couches, and eat the lambs of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; we chaunt to the sound of the viol, and invent to ourselves instruments of music; we drink wine in bowls, and anoint ourselves with the chief ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*.” Such, in fact, has been our abundance, that we think of nothing but ease and pleasure, mirth and feasting. There are multitudes whose god is their belly; who indulge their sensual appetite to excess, both in eating and drinking; who “rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, and continue until night, till wine inflame them.” And how many are there of both sexes, but particularly the female, who are sinfully extravagant in articles of dress; and to whom the description of Isaiah, in the 3d chapter, is strictly applicable! “The daughters of Zion are

* Amos vi. 4—6.

haughty, and walk with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go; and indulging in the extravagant use of veils, earrings, bracelets, and jewels*." However light this may be esteemed, it was one of the crimes which went to make up the sum of national guilt among the Jews, and against which God denounced a most humiliating doom. And let us remember, that similar causes, wherever they exist, produce similar effects.

And to what an alarming height have the sins of Sabbath-breaking and profane swearing risen! The day which God has set apart for himself, has, by all classes of men, been arrogated to themselves, as a day of pleasure, of amusement, and of sin. And the holy and reverend name of God is shamefully taken in vain. From the volleys of oaths, that are unblushingly poured forth in our streets, we should be led to suppose, that all the checks of conscience were hushed, and that our citizens glory in their shame. Merciful God! how often have mine own ears been assailed with blasphemy, from the lips of children scarcely started in existence! how often have I heard them imprecating thy wrath upon themselves and others, while their lips should have been employed in celebrating thy praise! Nor is

* ver. 16—20.

this characteristic of youth alone. I have heard aged sinners, whose tongues are almost palsied in death, bursting, as it were, the ligaments of death, that they might utter those imprecations which are re-echoed in hell! This sin carries with it the marks of horrid aggravation; and its great prevalence is matter of peculiar astonishment. For of all others it affords the least pretext for indulgence; and is most inconsistent with the character of christians, and of *gentlemen*. It proves, however, among other things, the rapid progress of licentiousness, and that we have loud and repeated calls to humiliation and penitence.

3. *Ingratitude for our national mercies, is a sin, which this day calls for repentance.*

The American people have been blessed above all other nations. When we were groaning under oppression, God gave us emancipation; and established our civil liberties. When we were poor, he opened to us sources of wealth, and blessed our citizens in their basket and in their store. And when we were in bondage to sin and satan, he offered us deliverance in the Gospel of his Son. These things were, on our part, wholly unmerited, and have laid us under the strongest obligations to gratitude. But these wonders of the Lord, are either "forgotten as a dead man out of mind," or

at *best* remembered with cold indifference. As we have prospered, we have grown proud; as providence has interposed for our relief, we have presumed; as we have been delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we have become secure; as we were established in peace and plenty, we have grown dissolute and profane; and as the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, has shone upon us, we have loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil.—Like “Jeshurun, when we have waxed fat, we have kicked; we have forsaken the God that made us, and lightly esteemed the rock of our salvation.”—We have not preserved upon our minds a grateful remembrance of his mercies, and have scarcely performed the formalities of a thanksgiving; we have been unmindful of all his gracious benefits, and lived as if we were under no obligations to glorify him.—Do not these things prove that we are a people laden with iniquity, and that we are the deserved objects of Jehovah’s displeasure? Can we not in the light of these sins behold the reasons for which God is contending with us? Why else, has Jehovah sent among us from time to time the pestilence, to sweep away our inhabitants from our cities? Why else, have tremendous storms spread desolation and death along our seaboard? Why else, have earthquakes been felt in every direction, and spread dismay and terror throughout our country? and why

else, are we scourged with the curse of War*? These things, might indeed be attributed to a variety of second causes, but the great cause is *our national guilt*. *Our sins*, have separated between us and God; *our sins* have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, and brought down upon us, one after another, his desolating judgments. And have we not abundant reason to mourn? are not these the loudest calls to repentance? and shall we still continue hardened and insensible? O, let us rather lay our hands upon our mouths, humbly acknowledge our iniquities, and exercise godly sorrow! let us rather kiss the rod which is shaken over our heads, and whose weight we have already felt, and return like repenting backsliders unto the Lord our God. For “surely it is meet” at this day, to say unto God, “We have borne chastisement, we will not offend any more: that which we see not, teach thou us:

* The reason why the author did not enlarge, on the three first of these afflictive providences, in this place, was, that he formerly endeavoured to improve them, as they separately occurred; and as to the War, it was not declared at the time the fast-day was recommended by the ecclesiastical authority: he therefore felt himself at liberty to mention it without dwelling long upon it; and he confesses that the relief was pleasant to his mind: for whatever politicians may say as to the justice or injustice of the measure, it gives him pain, as a professing christian, to reflect, *that the only two countries on earth where pure and undefiled religion prevail, are at War!*

and if we have done iniquity, we will," by thy grace,
 "do so no more."

2d. *The state of the church calls upon us this day
 to mourn.*

It has been foretold in the records of truth concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that "his dominion
 "should reach from sea to sea, and from the river
 "to the ends of the earth; yea, that all kings
 "should bow down before him; and all nations
 "should serve him; that men should be blessed in
 "him, and all nations call him blessed." But it is evident that the extent of Christ's kingdom doth not yet equal this magnificent description. There are still many dark corners of the earth upon which the sun of righteousness hath never risen:—many parts of the habitable globe, which are yet the regions of death. Heathenism and Mahometanism, with their concomitants, ignorance and superstition, prevail over *Asia, Africa*, part of *Europe*, and *Western America*. The inhabitants of these places are excluded in a great measure from all the means of religious information: for how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how can they hear without the preachers of the Gospel? The grossest darkness obscures their mental and spiritual horizon, and if they *have* any religion at all, it is the offspring of ignorance and

blind superstition, which overwhelm genuine religion, and instead of adding dignity to human nature, degrade it on the scale of creation.—In this melancholy state of thousands of our fellow-men, the church ought this day to deplore

The want of Gospel Ministers.

“ The harvest is truly great, but the labourers are few.” There is abundant room in the gospel vineyard, for the labour of additional thousands. Even in our own land, in our own communion ; but particularly in the communion of our sister Presbyterian church, there are a multitude of congregations who are mourning their silent Sabbaths ! and in the vast continent of Asia, and throughout the vast population of India and China, how great must be the dearth of hearing the word of the Lord ! and compared with this extensive and growing field, how few are the labourers ! how few are found dedicating themselves to the service of God in the Gospel of his Son ! how few, even in this *civilized, christian land*, are found willing to devote their time and talents to the good of souls ? and, alas ! how few are found, willing to forsake all and follow Christ *into the Land of Strangers !* A few, a memorable few, have indeed left their country and their comforts, to carry the glad tidings of peace to the benighted heathen ; but in the present convulsed state of the

world, it is to be feared that their supplies will be cut off, and they be left to perish for want: but if they do, they shall have throughout the Church the honour of martyrdom, and in heaven the reward of eternal life. Christians, mourn this day, for this affliction of Zion*.

Zion calls upon us to mourn *the want of Union.*

The Church of Christ is but one. She has but one head, and all her members constitute one mystical body. And yet, if we were to view her as at present, distinguished by a variety of names, and cut up into different sections, we would suppose that she was many; that there was no common bond of union; and that her interests were as various as her names. And this supposition is too much cherished by ignorance, by superstition, and by unsanctified bigotry. We too often hear the different denominations, speaking with blind zeal, for the interest of *their church*, as distinct from the general interests of the Church of Christ. This want of union in the Church, like want of union in the state, weakens her councils, and palsies her efforts in promoting the

* The persons here alluded to, are the Rev. Messrs. Samuel Newell, Adoniram Judson, Samuel Nott, Gordon Hall, and Luther Rice, who left this country last February, as missionaries to the heathen in Asia; under the direction of the American board of commissioners for foreign Missions.

cause of Christ. What might not the Church of Christ do, in alleviating the miseries and saving the souls of men, if, instead of turning her influence into different sectarian channels, it was all concentrated into one, in which Christ would be all and in all? Then Idols would indeed totter to the ground, and we might cherish the enrapturing hope, that the kingdoms of this world would soon become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. **THIS UNION MUST ONE DAY TAKE PLACE.** The names of the different denominations, must be absorbed in the general name of *the Church of Christ*. Till then, let us mourn over our present separation: bury our local prejudices; and in our different stations, do all in our power to break down the wall of partition; that thus we may dwell together as members of the same body, partakers of the same hope, and travellers to the same heaven.

The Church calls upon us this day to lament *the prevalence of Heresy*.

The word of God contains a perfect system of saving truth. The most perfect order, symmetry, and beauty, shines throughout the whole. One doctrine is connected with another, in such a manner, that if you deny one, the chain is broken; and you are lost in a maze of uncertainty and error. The chain has been broken;—the glory of God's word is tarnish-

ed; error has come in like a flood, and spread itself like a raging torrent. "The floods have lifted up their voices; the floods have lifted up their waves." Most of the pernicious errors, which formerly disturbed the church in other countries, are two eagerly embraced in our own; and what a venerable divine said on this subject nearly a century ago, may now be said with a little variation. "God's election of his people to glory, is arraigned as unreasonable," and his sovereignty as a proof of tyranny. "The fall of man is almost forgotten; and his original corruption is denied. Justification by the righteousness of Christ, is pursued with rancour and malice," and the filthy and polluted rags of our righteousness, are considered an adequate substitute. "The efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit, in his sanctifying and comforting influences, is considered enthusiasm, and the power of man to convert himself, arrogantly contended for. The perseverance of the saints in holiness, is profanely ridiculed, and the doctrine of the wicked being reserved for eternal torments, is atheistically denied*."

These are errors which more or less prevail in all parts of our country, where the carnal mind continues to be enmity against God. And besides

* See a Sermon of the Rev. Abraham Taylor, on "The Causes of the Decay of Practical Religion," in the Lime-street Sermons, vol. 2d. pages 582—3.

these, there have been at the eastward, and particularly in the vicinity of Boston, the most blasphemous attempts to rob Christ and the holy Spirit of the glory of their Supreme Divinity ; to reduce them to the rank of mere creatures ; to deny their personality, or to make them, at best, only attributes, powers, and names of the Father.

O, how has the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed ! Pure and undefiled religion, once prevailed there, as much as ever it did in any place on earth. They were the children of the good old *Puritans*, (as they were contemptuously styled by the foes to vital godliness,) and they continued for years to cherish and to practise the principles of the reformation. But it is now so no more ; a great proportion have abandoned the creed of their fore-fathers, and formed one out of their own carnal imagination ! They have apostatized from the faith of Christ, and adopted the creed of *Socinus* ! As we love and value the truth, then, let us mourn over this prevalence of error ; let us plead, that God would *give the people* “repentance to the acknowledgment of the *truth* as it is in Jesus : and that there may be no more false teachers among them, who bring in damnable heresies, **EVEN DENYING THE LORD THAT BOUGHT THEM**, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction*.”

* 2 Pet. ii. 1.

'The Church ought this day to mourn the want of *the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit.*

In the days of the apostles, and primitive christians, when the Holy Spirit descended, and accompanied the word preached; what shaking was there among the dry bones! what quickening of those that were dead in trespasses and sins! and what flocking of sinners to the standard of the cross, as doves and as clouds to their windows! While the apostle Peter was preaching repentance and remission of sins, on the day of Pentecost, his hearers, by the influence of the blessed Spirit, were pricked in their hearts, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved? And the same day were added unto the Church about three thousand souls*." And while the same apostle was preaching to Cornelius and his company, that "Christ is ordained of God, to be the Judge of quick and dead, and that whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word†." Such was the success of the Gospel, while accompanied by the power of the Spirit. But when God in his sovereignty did not give the increase, a Paul planted, and an Apollos watered, in vain.

* Acts ii. 37—41.

† Acts x. 42—44.

In this way alone, can we account for the small success of the Gospel at the present day. In many places the Gospel is preached in as much purity and simplicity, as it was formerly ; and many ministers of the word, according to grace given, are proportionably as zealous and faithful. Why then are they not as successful? Why are they obliged to “hang their harps on the willows, and to complain, Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” It is because the Lord does not bring home this report with power to the conscience, by the operations of his blessed Spirit. It is because we have done despite unto the Spirit of grace, and resisted his influence, that God has waxed a controversy with us, and declared that “his Spirit shall not always strive with man.”

This, my hearers, is far from being a subject of mere speculation and uncertainty. It is a solemn, serious, and alarming fact. Though we, and a few other congregations, have no reason to “despise the day of small things;” yet it may be said with truth, of the Churches in general, and of the *reformed Dutch Church* in particular, that the Comforter is in a great measure departed; and consequently, that the work of conversion is much at a stand. Few, very few, are now seen or heard inquiring the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. Few, very few, are added unto the Churches

of such as shall be saved. Sinners often hear thunders from mount Sinai, and a still small voice from the palaces of Zion; but they continue fearless and stupid, senseless and unaffected. And even professing christians, often sit before God as his people sit, and are found in the use of external ordinances; and yet go away as full of formality and deadness as if they had never been engaged in them. The reason is, the Holy Spirit does not accompany the word preached with his blessing, and does not clothe his ordinances with power. *He* withdraws from us, whose presence is the glory of our assemblies, and leaves us to mourn the effects of our mad ingratitude in slighting his person, and grieving his operations*!

And is not this a loud call upon us to weep and to mourn, and to gird ourselves with sackcloth? Is it a small thing that we have provoked the Holy One of Israel to hide his face from us? That by our sins we have constrained him to withdraw his Holy Spirit, and leave us to barren, unprofitable ordinances?—Oh! my friends, if we only realized the importance and absolute necessity of the Spirit—that without him no saving benefit can reach our souls—that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his—and that upon him depends all the ex-

* See note, page 28.

ercises of grace in us ;—all holy obedience to God, and communion with him, and all our spiritual life, comfort, and safety, both in time and in eternity ; could we, I say, realize this, we would need no arguments to induce us to lament his absence—we would sigh and cry for his removal from our solemn assemblies, and our own souls !

And if this is indeed such a loud call to us to repent and mourn ; let us hear the voice, and answer it, with the fervent prayer of the Psalmist, “ Cast us not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from us ; restore unto us the joy of thy salvation, and uphold us with thy free Spirit. Thy Spirit is good, let him lead us into the land of uprightness.”



SERMON II.



ISAIAH xxii. 12, 13, 14.

“ And in that day, &c. and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord^l of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts.”



II. **WE** proceed to consider the state in which we continue, notwithstanding these calls.

“ And behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die*.” Astonishing! that a people, whose country was invaded by a powerful army; whose cities were sacked, and whose temple was in danger of pollution, should indulge so much levity and carnal security! Would we not rather have supposed, that, while God’s hand was upon them, they would have felt: that while his voice spake, their ears would have heard: and that, addressing each other in the language of

* ver. 13.

contrition, they would have said, "come, then, let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up!" And yet, instead of mourning, behold gladness; instead of fasting, behold eating and drinking, in the most riotous and luxurious manner; instead of trembling at the threatenings of Jehovah, behold the atheistical scoff, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

We wonder, we stand amazed, at *their* conduct! and yet, it is to be feared, that the evils of which the Prophet complains, are too descriptive of our own state.

The judgments of God have been abroad in the earth, but we have not noticed them. We have seen the nations in distress, but we have not sympathized with them. We have read of battles, and the effusion of the blood of thousands of our fellow-creatures, with indifference! We have seen one kingdom after another, crumbling before the growing power of a despot, and have gazed at the spectacle with as much apathy, as we would at the fall of so many trees; and with as much proud and self-confident security, as if it were impossible for us to share the same fate. We have even presumed upon the providence of God, by neglecting the ordinary means of safety; and, as if that were not enough, *we have voluntarily thrown ourselves into*

the arms of danger. Just like the Jews, who lived in carnal security, trusting to a few fortifications, and not in him who “rules in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth.”

The judgments we have already experienced, have been calculated to make every heart heavy, and every countenance sad. But we still live in habits of conviviality and dissipation, and indulge an unsuitable gayety and levity of mind. And there are multitudes in our country, who rejoice at the late war measure, as if it were the most glorious event that has happened since the revolution*. Just like the Jews, who indulged “joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine.”

We have had one warning after another, that unless we repented and turned unto God, heavier judgments were still in store for us; but we have treated them with contempt and ridicule. We have profanely scoffed, saying, “these things come in the ordinary course of human events, and therefore are

* To the honour of the citizens of this state, be it recorded, that there are few such among us. With the reflecting, of both parties, the war is spoken of with regret. But the remark is fully applicable to the citizens of the Southern States. With what face will they observe the day of humiliation, recommended by the President of the United States?

no proof that we deserve them more than others; or if we do, they have as yet done little harm, and in future we need expect no more danger." Just like the Jews, who, ridiculing the idea of the near approach of their destruction, said, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:"

Such is our general character. But if we descend to particulars, we shall find that we are in a still more deplorable condition; not only stupid, insensible, and secure, under the dealings of God; but actually and utterly *insensible to the causes* of his afflictive dispensations.

We have said, that the elevation of wicked men to offices, was a national sin; and of course that it is one reason, why the nation ought to mourn. But the people in general are far, very far, from being sensible of this. So far in fact are they from it, that they practically deny, and cannot endure to be told of it. Now as reformation must always be preceded by conviction of error, we would expostulate with you on this subject. Why are you unwilling to be addressed on this point. Is it because any of you have yielded your support, to those who were not worthy of it, and therefore, that to be spoken to would look like reproof. This will not satisfy; because if you are convinced of having done wrong, candour obliges you to acknowledge it; and honesty compels you to do so no more.

Is it, because we are required “not to speak evil of the rulers of God’s people?”—Then all that a wicked man has to do, is to secure the favour of the people, and use this as a stepping stone to office, and his office will be a cloke to his crimes!—then virtue and vice cease to be distinct, and all the qualifications which God’s word requires in a ruler, become nugatory. But let us examine this objection. “Thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people.” We acknowledge this to be a binding prescription of God’s word; but what is “evil speaking,” the crime here prohibited? It is “*the using of language either reproachful or untrue, respecting others, and thereby injuring them*.*” To speak, then, either *reproachfully or falsely* of a ruler, is not only criminal, but dishonourable: but to speak the truth, in a respectful manner, is not implied in “*evil speaking*.” But, even if the truth should be construed evil speaking, still it may be spoken of the man, as a man, while we respect him in the character of a ruler. *The magistracy is an ordinance of God*, and ought uniformly to be spoken of, with tenderness, deference, and respect. But it is no cloke for any man’s crimes. The ministry of the Gospel is also an ordinance of God, though of a different nature; and if we are not “to speak *evil of dignities*,” much less of the ministers of the Gospel: for their office, of all others on earth, is

* *Buck’s Theological Dictionary.*

the most dignified. But are you willing to apply this reasoning to them? If they are profane swearers, Sabbath breakers, adulterers, drunkards, or infidels, are you to say nothing of their crimes, because they are ministers? Is their office to be a cloke for their sins? You will one and all answer, No. Why then will you not adopt the same mode of reasoning in the one case, that you do in the other? For the obvious reason, that it is absurd; grossly, and irrationally, and unscripturally absurd. And if absurd in one case, it is also absurd in the other; for the cases are exactly similar. The prevalence, then, of that strange disposition in both political parties, to blind their reason, and shackle their speech, on this subject, is a striking proof that they are not sensible of their sin.

But there is another proof of *insensibility* on this point; and that is, that many who acknowledge the principle, that we ought to have men for our rulers, who fear God; and consequently acknowledge that they do wrong in supporting any others, justify themselves under the impression, that they cannot get pious men who are qualified for rulers. This is a delusion. As to qualification, even in the lax sense in which it is generally used, as importing strength of intellect, and a knowledge of state affairs, surely it is as likely to be found in the pious, as the wicked part of the community. Otherwise we get into that dreadful dilemma, that piety and

intellect never go together, and consequently, that ignorance and weakness are essential ingredients in the character of a christian! And as to the impossibility of obtaining them, we affirm, that this is so far from being the case, that ours is the only country on the face of the earth, where they can be obtained. In hereditary governments the people are compelled to receive as their sovereign, the lawful heir, whether he be good or bad, a wise man or a fool. But here, where the people have a voice in the election of their rulers, they can elect whom they please. And why not a man who fears God, as well as one who fears him not? It is because this is *never* required, as it ought *always* to be, as an essential qualification; or because there is not virtue enough in the people to support him. In either case, the position is established, that we continue in a state of insensibility to one of the causes of our present afflictions, notwithstanding the call of God in it, to repentance.

We have been called upon to mourn for the prevalence of irreligion and profaneness; but what are the general sentiments respecting them? Sentiments of sorrow, or of indifference? As to those who are guilty, there is too little hope of their contrition; they continue insensible of their guilt, and of course incapable of sorrow. There are few, very few, symptoms of abridgment, in the indulgence of unlawful pleasures; of increasing rever-

ence for the holy name of God; or of growing respect to the institutions of the Sabbath. The same habits of extravagance and dissipation; the same contempt of all God's commandments, that prevailed before we heard his warning voice, it is to be feared, prevail still. And as to those who profess to have escaped the pollutions that are in the world, they do not mourn as they ought over the prevalence of vice. Too few of them adopt the prayer of the Psalmist, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men *."

Our ingratitude is another source of our present afflictions; and as such loudly calls for repentance. But is there any thing like a general conviction of our unthankfulness? That we have been abundantly and distinguishingly blessed, since the Revolution, all must acknowledge; but will all as readily acknowledge the hand that has secured to us our civil and religious liberties, and enriched us with his blessings? alas! we have forgotten *that the Lord* has been gracious, and have been too ready to ascribe our privileges to the military and *political skill* of men, instead of thankfully acknowledging the blessing of God upon their endeavours! And do we not still continue ungrateful? the proof is in our conduct: for gratitude to God is always accom-

* xii. 1.

panied with an abiding sense of his goodness ; of our own unworthiness ; and of our obligations to live to his glory. And is there not too much reason to believe, that we are not humbled under a sense of our unworthiness ? that instead of seeking his glory, we are eagerly pursuing our own individual interests ? that God is not in all our thoughts, and of the rock that begat us we are unmindful ?

But if such is the state, in which we continue as a nation, notwithstanding our national calls to repentance, what is the state of the Church ? Alas, many places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty ! the Heathen are enveloped in darkness, and bound in chains of superstition. They bow with melancholy reverence before the Idols of their own creation, or sacrifice themselves before their blood-stained *Towers**. But do christians pity, or do christians mourn ! They have, indeed, done much in other countries to alleviate the miseries, and save the souls, of their fellow-men ; but we can take very little of the honour to ourselves. The wealth of our citizens has not been dedicated to Missionary purposes. The talents of our youth have not been devoted to the service of God, in the Gospel of his Son. The tears of our christians have not watered the tree of the cross, nor their prayers as-

* The allusion is to the barbarous custom of the Hindoos, in casting themselves under the wheels of the Idol Juggernaut.—See Buchanan's Researches,

cended to heaven for its growth. There is a general apathy, at the want of labourers in the vineyard of the Gospel. There is a general and a sectarian indifference at the want of union and of charity, among different denominations of christians. There is little lamentation at the contagion of false doctrine ; and few expressions of grief at the departure of the Holy Spirit. Else why is it not the united prayer of God's people, that he would raise up, qualify, and send forth, more faithful Gospel ministers ; and that, when they are raised up, they do not meet with better support and encouragement in the discharge of their duties ? Else why is there so much blind, unsanctified zeal, among the different sects, to build up the separating walls of their own Church, while they neglect to build up the mouldering walls of Zion in general ? Else why are there so few attempts to counteract error ; and such a growing connivance at that false maxim, " that it is no matter what people believe, provided they are sincere ? " Else why do we not sigh and cry, that the heavens are as brass over our spiritual horizon ; that the dews of divine grace do not refresh our barren vineyards ; and that the Holy Spirit does not descend upon us in the influences of his early and latter rains ; his early rain to convince of sin, and his latter rain to ripen our souls for glory ? Alas ! we have reason to fear, that, notwithstanding the afflictions of Joseph, yet we are not grieved ; that, though God is calling upon us, yet we do not hear his voice. For, in the

language of a good old divine, “ If a professing people are zealous for the *truths* of the Gospel ; if they are careful to regulate their worship by the pattern given in the word, and if they abound in the works of righteousness, and shine in the beauties of holiness, it may be said that the glory of Christ resides among them, and that their blessings will be crowned with a desirable increase ; but, if they are lukewarm and indifferent, as to the great truths of the Gospel ; if they are negligent in attending on the worship appointed by their great Prophet and King, and if they act dissolutely, and, instead of denying themselves, symbolize with a profane world, it may be said of them, that their beauty is tarnished, that gray hairs, the tokens of spiritual decays, are upon them, and the glory is upon the departure*.”

And have we not too much reason to fear, that the latter is our case ? Is it not a fact that lukewarmth and formality prevail in the Churches in general, but in the Dutch Reformed Church in particular, to an alarming degree ? That many, who have a name to live, are actually dead ; have only the form, while they are destitute of the power of godliness ? And what is still more alarming, that many who have named the name of Christ, have not even the form ; that heads of families neglect

* The Rev. Abraham Taylor.

the duty of prayer ; and that individuals, by their untoward walk and conversation, bring disgrace on the profession of religion, and contempt on the dear Redeemer himself? Such, alas! is the state of religion in the Church, and of morality in the community, though the dispensations of Providence are calling upon us to sigh and cry for the afflictions that have come upon us! What then shall we say of these things? Will a righteous God suffer such iniquity and insensibility to go unpunished? Let us, in answer to this, consider,

III. The sin and danger of our state.

“ And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged away from you, till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts*.” The doom of the Jews, when this sentence was pronounced, was fixed. In this respect, their case and ours, we humbly hope, differ. But as similar causes produce similar effects, this denunciation may serve to teach us the sin and danger of impenitence, under the afflictive dispensations of God. This was the sin of the Jews. The Lord had dealt with them severely for their wickedness, but they continued insensible ; and this insensibility was “ the iniquity which the Prophet said should not be purged away.”

* Ver. 14.

Now the sins which have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger against *us*, are doubtless great; but what will be their additional aggravation, if under the manifestations of his anger, we continue impenitent? what should we think of a child, that should manifest such a spirit under our chastisements? would we not view him as hardened and incorrigible; and be tempted either to use more severe measures to produce a reformation, or leave him to the obstinacy of his own will?—Now Jehovah has nourished and brought us up like children, but we have rebelled against him; and dealing with us as children, he has chastised us for our rebellion, with the merciful design of producing a reformation. But if we continue hardened and impenitent, will not his pure eyes behold in our former sins, accumulated aggravations, and blacker stains of guilt? But if impenitence under the severities of God be *sinful*, it is also *dangerous*. What else constrained Jehovah to swear by his own existence and immortal perfections, that the “iniquity of the Jews should not be purged away from them till they died?”—What happened to them then, aforetime, ought to be an ensample to us. If the same characteristics of impenitence continue to be found on us, we have no right to expect any other doom. If we continue to be distinguished, by an utter disregard to the moral and religious character of our rulers; by irreligion and contempt of sacred things; by licentiousness, faction, luxury;

dissipation, and effeminacy, we may be *assured*, that without a reformation, we are laying up in store, some more awful judgments, and preparing the way for the execution of divine vengeance. Thus saith the Lord, “ I have smitten you with blasting and mildew : when your gardens and your vineyards increased, the palmer-worm devoured them : yet ye have not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you *the pestilence* after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword ; and I have made *the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils* : yet ye have not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore, thus will I do unto thee, O, Israel ; and because I will do this unto thee, *prepare to meet thy God*.*” “ If ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my *judgments*, so that ye will not do all my commandments, I also will do this unto you : I will even appoint over you terror ; that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart ; and if for all this you will not hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more, for your iniquities †.”

And if such is the sin and danger of the impenitence of our country ; what may not the Church expect, if she manifests a similar spirit ? The Church is indeed built on a rock, and the

* Amos iv. 9. † Lev. xxvi. 16;

gates of hell shall never prevail against it. But God has often dealt severely with its members for their abuse of Gospel privileges. Witness the Churches of Asia. They were once golden candlesticks, in the midst of which the Lord Jesus delighted to dwell; but they are now groaning under the darkness and the tyranny of Mahometanism. As they once were, so we are now, distinguished for our privileges, our Gospel, and our sabbaths; but if, like them, we abuse our privileges, we have no reason to expect a better doom. If the Reformed Dutch Church, like the Church of Ephesus, does not remember from whence she is fallen, and repent, and do her first works; she has reason to fear, that God will come unto her quickly, and remove her candlestick out of his place. If, like the church of Sardis, she continues to retain a name that she lives, while she is dead, and does not speedily strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; she has good reason to fear that God will come upon her as a thief, and that she shall not know what hour he will come upon her. And if, like the Church of Laodicea, she continues lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot; she has abundant reason to fear that God will yet spue her out of his mouth*. The same tokens of the divine displeasure; the same formality; the same deadness; the same coldness, that was found among them, are in an alarming degree to be found among us; and unless we repent of our abuse of privileges, we may

* Rev. ii. 1. iii. 1—4.

expect that God will say of us, “ *I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren* *.”

Thus you have heard the duty to which God is calling us, in the dark dispensations of his providence; the insensible and incorrigible state, in which we have hitherto continued, notwithstanding these calls; and the awful sin and danger of such a state. What then remains, but, that we exhort you, earnestly henceforth, to listen to the voice of God; to hear the rod, and him who hath appointed it. Strive, O strive to be sensible of the true causes of our present afflictions, and, being sensible of them, mourn over them with godly sorrow; and do every thing within the compass of your power, to bring about a reformation! Ye citizens, abuse not your right of suffrage, by the election of men, who *have not the fear of God before their eyes*. Recollect, that though it is a distinguished privilege, to have the choice of your rulers, yet that it is a privilege which increases your responsibility. Act, therefore, one and all, in this important concern,

* Jer. vii. 15.

How remarkably has this been verified with the Church of Holland! She was for years chargeable with the sins of lukewarmth and formality, and many of her pious members predicted the darkness, with which she is at present shrouded. May her children in America take warning; and while they are strenuous in the regulation of forms and ceremonies, let them not forget “ *Weightier matters* ”

as those who feel that you must one day give an account to the Ruler of rulers. And especially, *professing Christians*, manifest, that in the discharge of this, as much as any other duty, you are governed by *christian*, and not by *party principles*. And, therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or vote, do it for the glory of God, and the good of your country. And could I, with the same voice of exhortation, reach the ears of our rulers, believing them to be guilty, as well as the people, I would say, “Be wise, now, therefore, O ye rulers ; be instructed, ye judges of the earth: serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little : blessed are all they that put their trust in him*.” Them that *honour him* he *will honour* : but such as *despise him*, shall be *lightly esteemed*,

And, ye votaries of pleasure, ye profane swearers ; ye sabbath-breakers ; and ye wanton transgressors of God’s commandments ; as your sins have contributed to fill up the measure of our national-guilt, it becomes you, for *the sake of the nation*, to repent and reform. But, *on your own personal account*, the duty is imperious and urgent. You are, by nature and practice, the children of wrath. The sentence of condemnation is gone forth, and unless it

* Ps. ii. 19.

be speedily blotted out, by the blood of Jesus, the king of terrors will arrest, and bear you away to execution. Already his arrows are on the wing, and you know not how soon one of them may reach your heart. Therefore, speedily awake to righteousness, and sin not. While time lasts, improve it in the business of your souls; and while Christ is offered to you in his Gospel, accept of him in the merit of his atonement, and the all-sufficiency of his grace.

Ye, who are ungrateful for the distinguished privileges, of your civil and religious liberties, mourn this day over your sin of ingratitude.—Mourn over it this day, did we say? Mourn over it while you live; for it is not the contrition, the abstinence, or the supplications *of a day*, that will manifest your sincerity. Therefore, ever cherish in your hearts and lives, a grateful remembrance of the goodness of God, in casting your lot in this land of liberty, and “in crowning you with loving kindness and tender mercy.”

And, ye professing Christians, mourn before God for the desolations of Zion; and plead with him, that, through the merit of Christ, he would heal her breaches, and advance her interests in the world. No doubt there are some, who can weep when they remember Zion; and who do offer up fervent prayers for her prosperity. But who of us here pre-

sent can say, that we have been sufficiently affected at the view of her state? If we are honest, we must each bring a charge against ourselves before the throne of God, for our coldness, our indifference, and our sloth :—that we have not often enough remembered the spiritual wants of the outcast Jews, and the benighted Heathen ; that we have not prayed for an increase of labourers in the Gospel vineyard ; that we have not done all that was in our power, to heal the divisions that exist among Christians ; and that we have not bewailed the departure of the Spirit from the Sanctuary ; nor frequently and fervently prayed for his return !

Conscious of guilt, then, let us abhor ourselves, and turn unto the Lord, with a true and unfeigned repentance. Let us “ be afflicted and mourn, and weep ; let our laughter be turned into mourning, and our joy into heaviness. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, *and he will lift us up* * :” For thus saith that merciful God with whom we have to do, “ Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well.” “ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool †.” That our endeavours, then, after repentance and reformation, may be suc-

* James iv. 10.

† Is. i. 18

cessful, let us pray for the Holy Spirit, to “break the rocky heart in pieces, to cause us to remember our own evil ways which have not been good, and to loath ourselves for our iniquities and abominations.” And, in the grace of the same Spirit, let us seriously and solemnly resolve, in these courts of the Lord, that we will, in our several stations and relations, more earnestly plead with God, and more zealously deal with men, to promote the spread of pure and undefiled religion.

Then shall this be a Fast which the Lord has chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free. Then shall our light break forth as the morning, and the glory of God shall be our reward; then shall we call, and the Lord shall answer us; then we shall cry, and he shall say, Here I am*.

Amen.

* Isaiah lviii. 6—9.



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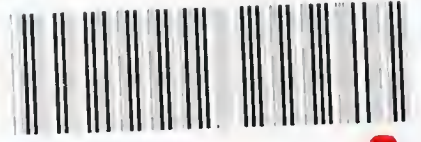
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